

**Department of Correction
Testimony of Eric Ellison, Parole Manager**

**Judiciary Committee
March 16, 2015**

**Raised Bill No. 1087, AN ACT CONCERNING SEXUAL OFFENDER
REGISTRATION LAWS, RESIDENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR
REGISTERED SEXUAL OFFENDERS AND REENTRY HOUSING**

Good afternoon, Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Eric Ellison, Parole Manager for the Department of Correction. I am here to express the Department's opposition to Section 45 of Raised Bill No. 1087, An Act Concerning Sexual Offender Registration Laws, Residency Restrictions for Registered Sexual Offenders and Reentry Housing. This language is almost identical to last year's Raised Bill 5449 which I also testified in opposition. In addition to my written testimony, I have submitted an article from the Council of State Governments Justice Center's Correction Section on the Connecticut Department of Correction Sex Offender Supervision Model for your review.

The Department of Correction's Parole and Community Services Division employs an evidenced-based multidisciplinary approach to effectively manage registered sex offenders in the community. This approach includes techniques and interventions shown to result in positive outcomes and reduce sexual recidivism. Restricting access to potential minor victims is a critical intervention which reduces the likelihood of future sexual victimization. Parole officers responsible for the supervision of registered sex offenders make decisions to exclude certain registered sex offenders from contact with minors using all available information and input from the division's collaborative partners.

These partners include contracted sex offender treatment providers and polygraph examiners from The Connection Inc., Center for the

Treatment of Problem Sexual Behavior; Victim Advocates from Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS); state police from the Connecticut State Police Sex Offender Registry Unit; local law enforcement responsible for matters relating to registered sex offenders; Department of Correction institutional sex offender treatment providers; and staff from the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Parole's sex offender management techniques and interventions include the use of validated sex offender risk assessments, polygraph examinations, individualized case management plans, offense specific cognitive-behavioral sex offender treatment; intensive supervision including frequent compliance checks, GPS monitoring, toxicology testing, sex offender registration, victim advocacy, computer monitoring, computer forensic examinations, and surveillance.

The residency restriction provision contained in Section 45 of Raised Bill No. 1087 would negatively impact the Department's ability to place and effectively supervise sex offenders on parole because already scarce housing options would be drastically reduced. In reality, future paroled sex offenders would no longer be able to live in major urban areas, limiting their access to parole offices, sex offender treatment, jobs, and other necessary services. The majority of registered sex offenders currently on parole reside in major urban areas where schools, daycares, and senior centers are concentrated.

Additionally, parole officers would lose the ability to effectively monitor risk factors related to sexual offending due to the certain increase in offender homelessness. Electronic monitoring devices would become difficult, if not impossible, to utilize due to the lack of available power sources necessary to charge monitoring equipment.

Stable housing is a critical factor in the successful reintegration of sex offenders. Housing instability has been shown to increase general and sexual recidivism. The bill's provisions would restrict some paroled sex offenders from residing with supportive family or friends leading to

isolation and an increased risk to reoffend. Residency restrictions are not supported by empirical evidence and there appears to be no relationship between proximity and recidivism.

Sex offender registration, as defined by C.G.S. Chapter 969, is based solely on crime of conviction and is not a reliable predictor of risk. This system should not serve as the basis for residency restrictions. Relevant static and dynamic factors, shown to be predictive of sexual recidivism, are absent from the Connecticut sex offender registry.

While the majority of sexual offenses against minors are perpetrated by family, friends, or others known to the victim, a predatory offender intent on reoffending can conceivably access a minor victim anywhere in the community. Studies have shown these offenders actually prefer targeting minor victims in neighborhoods other than their own where they will not be recognized.

If this Raised Bill were to move out of committee, the Department would like to see, prior to any final action, the development of a statewide map identifying the one-thousand foot zones surrounding all public and private elementary schools and every daycare service provider in the state. With this tool we could have a meaningful conversation regarding the severe housing restrictions for this population.